

Existing Probation and Aftercare Services in Bangladesh

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Abstract : *Probation and aftercare services are the major correctional services all over the world, particularly in Bangladesh. Generally, convicted people or released prisoners get the facilities. This paper is based on research findings regarding probation and aftercare services. Probation and aftercare services are helpful, and probation officers are caring and dutiful towards the probationers. According to the findings most of the probationers are poor, illiterate, low-income earners, and unsure of earnings. They are the victims of extramarital affairs, convicted of theft, and charged with murder. The probationers come to life and involve income-generating activities for survival within the community or family life. The probationers are satisfied with the services, but the assigned officers are dissatisfied with inadequate facilities. They demand proper guidelines and adequate logistics for better services to the probationers. This paper is formulated based on a case study and KIs. So, it is qualitative-based research findings through primary data. This paper deals with the guidelines for the government, policymakers, and correctional services in Bangladesh.*

1. Introduction

Probation and aftercare services are the major correctional services all over the world, particularly in Bangladesh. Probation and aftercare services of released prisoners are entrusted to the Department of Social Services (Rules of Business, Ministry Social Welfare, 1996). The running probation cases are 567, released probationers are 139, and the beneficiaries of aftercare services are 316 (Report on probation and aftercare services, the Department of Social Services, May 2020). The High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh comes up with an observation. Later issues as a circular from the office of the Registrar General (February 12, 2019) stated that the honorable Chief Justice of Bangladesh stresses the need for speed and time befitting implementation of the Probation of Offenders Ordinance,

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1960 to ease the overcrowding in prison. The study is concerned with the existing probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh. The study examines the impact of psycho-social, socio-economic and demographic conditions on the offender and his family. Then deals with the evaluation of the effectiveness of probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh. After that, the study attempts to identify the challenges and opportunities of probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh. Besides drawing attention to the policy formulation for the well-being of the offender and the development of the probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh, the study tries to show how probation and aftercare services can reduce the crime and deviance of community people in Bangladesh, which will inspire policymakers to initiate development activities for probationers or released prisoners, and the services by recovering the limitations and implementing the study's recommendations.

2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to show the existing probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh. Based on it, the study is in the light of the following specific objectives:

- a) to learn about the offender's socio-economic and demographic situations, as well as that of his family;
- b) to explore the information about the probationer's lifestyle during the probation period;
- c) to evaluate the existing services for probationers as well as the probation officer's duties or responsibilities;
- d) to find out the challenges and prospects of probation and aftercare services; and
- e) to draw some policy recommendations regarding the respondents' wellbeing and the development of probation and aftercare services in Bangladesh.

3. Working Definitions of the concepts Related to the Study

3.1. Probation

Probation is a process prescribed by the court for a person convicted of offenses against the law, during which the individual probationer lives

in the community, regulates his own life under conditions imposed by the court (or other constituted authority), and is subject to supervision by a probation officer (Friedlander and Apte, 1997, p.462). Probation under different laws is defined as an “order for conditional discharge” or “an order requiring [the offender] to be under the supervision of a Probation Officer” (<http://www.judiciary.org.bd/en/probation-services>). According to Cavan, ‘Probation is a sentence of imprisonment that is suspended, and also a sentence served while under supervision within the community.’ The Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960 states the purpose of probation is to “prevent a repetition of the identical offense or a commission of other by the offender and for rehabilitating him as an honest, industrious and law-abiding citizen. In this study, probation is a matter of treatment, subject to conditions imposed by or for order and guidance of a probation officer under the Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960.

3.2. Aftercare Service

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, “aftercare” refers to the care of people after they have left a hospital or prison. “aftercare” refers to the program and services for the rehabilitation of inmates released from correctional institutions (R. Deb, 1971, p.517). In the study, aftercare services mean rehabilitation services provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW), the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. It is the post-service of offenders who are on probation or released prisoners. In this study, it is defined as the rehabilitation and socialization process of the community people. Through aftercare services, a person can earn a livelihood, improve the standard of living and reduce problems.

4. Methodology of the Study

The study applies the qualitative research method with a case study design for probationers or released prisoners and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with probation officers or social services officers for in-depth data. In-depth Case Study design, participant observation, and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are used to collect information. The researcher himself is the collector of data following the qualified guidelines of objectives-related questions, probation officers under the

Department of Social Services (DSS), and all prisoners of Dhaka district (applicable section-5 of the Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960) are the population of the study. The probationers, released prisoners, and probation officers of the Dhaka district are the unit of analysis for collecting data through interviews and observation. The purposive sampling technique is adapted to select the respondents, and four respondents are set to collect data. They are under both probation and aftercare services. Two Probation Officers and two Social Services Officers are selected for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

From the perspective of qualitative research, this study tries to ensure diversity of data, but the sample size is small and inadequate in terms of the population. Four cases and four Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are conducted relevant to probation and aftercare services. For this purpose, a case study and KIIs guideline and checklist are used to collect qualitative data. Secondary data is from different study reports, articles publications, news published in the daily newspapers, and other related literature, websites, etcetera. Five pieces of literature, very much related to the present study, are reviewed. The data is analyzed through verbatim, thematic, and narrative techniques.

5. Probation and Aftercare Services in Bangladesh

5.1. The Origin of the Probation Service

The word probation comes from the Latin word probate. It means proving it. As a modern innovation in justice, it has deep roots in its evolution from earlier methods of dealing with the offender (Sarker, 1989, p.127). It can be traced to the English criminal law of the middle age. Harsh punishments were inflicted on adults and children alike for offenses that were not always serious. Sentences such as branding, flogging, mutilation, and execution were common. During the time of King Henry VIII, for instance, no less than 200 crimes were punishable by death, many of which were minor offenses. This harshness eventually leads to discontent among a progressive segment of English society concerned with the evolution of the justice system. Slowly but resolutely, to mitigate these inhumane punishments, measures are adopted. Probation (<https://probation.smcgov.org/history-of-probation>) was introduced in the United States as early as

1841 by John Augustus, a Boston shoemaker. He provides bail for a poor drunkard who was threatened to be sentenced to the house of correction and assumed his supervision during a probation period. Encouraged by the success of his first case, John August continued to bail, supervise, and assist about 2,000 adults and juveniles until he died in 1878. The first probation law for adult offenders was enacted in 1878 in Massachusetts, and since 1959, all the states, the federal government, and the District of Columbia have had probation laws (Friedlander and Apte, 1997, p.462).

5.2. Origin of Aftercare Service

The aftercare service is a community-based correctional service that provides care and protection for released prisoners. The aftercare service was introduced in America first in the nineteenth century. In 1909, it was introduced in Massachusetts for outpatient treatment as a transition between sequestration and re-entry into community life. Incarceration, even in the best-managed prisons, has serious drawbacks. A casual offender turns out to be a hardened criminal. Even when he comes out a penitent and reformed person, his friends and relatives detest him, and he acquires a stigma. Rejection by his social group comes in the way of his leading the life of a good citizen. These measures, however, do not prove adequate in achieving the aim of reformation and rehabilitation of the offender. Therefore, the aftercare service has emerged as a process of social integration and rehabilitation of the offender as a good citizen. An aftercare service is a support service by a welfare agency for a person discharged from an institution. The concept of aftercare has widened over time, and now measures taken to rehabilitate people suffering from physical or social disabilities also fall within its ambit. It may be defined as any program or service organized for the rehabilitation of (a) inmates released from institutions or (b) people suffering from physical or social handicaps on account of circumstances beyond their control. It is voluntary when the ex-inmate or the destitute can, of their own free will, accept or reject it. It is compulsory where the law makes it obligatory for an ex-inmate to come under the supervision of the aftercare organization. (R. Deb, 1971).

5.3. Present Situation of Probation and Aftercare Services in Bangladesh

Probation and aftercare services run by the Department of Social Services (DSS) are based on the philosophy of the disciplinary approach instead of awarding punishment to offenders. Social scientists believe that correction can permanently change the life pattern and behavior of an offender. Accordingly, the Probation of Offenders Ordinance was passed in 1960 and amended as an Act in 1964 (Mia, Hafizul Islam, 2007, p.94). Probation came into existence in Bangladesh as a correctional-service, through the promulgation of the Probation of Offenders Ordinance in 1960. During the Second 5-Year Plan period, two projects: The Probation of Offenders Project and the Aftercare Project, were initiated (in 1962). In the beginning, these programs were started separately in ten places in the country. Later in 1965, these two projects were merged into an integrated one. Twenty-one units were in operation in twenty-one district headquarters (mainly old) under the management of the Department of Social Services (DSS), Government of Bangladesh (Sarker, Abdul Hakim; 1989, p.129). After the liberation war of Bangladesh, social service activities were (initiated) in each Thana. The concerned Thana Social Services Officer was (entrusted) with the additional charges of the probation officer (DG, DSS, 1997). At present, there are 70 probation units in operation. Sixty-four probation units are in sixty-four districts, and six probation units are in six Chief Metropolitan Magistrates. All Upazila Social Services Officers (SSO) are on additional charges. All Social Services Officers (SSO) of the Urban Social Services Office at all divisions are additional charged are also two probation units in two Child Development Centers (CDC). (The report of at glance probation and aftercare services, May 2020 by the Department of Social Services). The staff pattern of the probation office is inadequate. The probation officer has an MLSS (Member of Lower Subordinate Staff) appointed by outsourcing to discharge his duties.

6. Case Study and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

6.1. Case Study

Though this study is based on four case studies and four KIIs, only two cases studies and two KIIs are presented here. Each case is

interviewed and observed following the case study and KIIs guidelines and checklist. The probationers are under the Probation Officers of the Dhaka district. The tenure of the case and KIIs period ends in 2020. The cases and KIIs are given below:

Case-One

Probationer, Abdul Mozid, is a man of fifty, who comes from a village, Eshan Gopalpur. He has a sister. His father is a farmer, and his mother was a housewife. He says, *"I lost my mother when I was three years old. I could not study because of my mother's death."* At the time of the in-depth case study session, he also says, *"My father got married when I was six years old. My stepmother had a son who was two and a half years old at the time she got married to my father. "After his father's marriage, he left his home. He lives at his neighbor's house. At the age of eight, he started working at a hotel at Aricha Ghat. At thirteen, he comes to Hazaribagh. He pulls a rickshaw for his livelihood. He got married to his first wife, Reshma, in 1985. He lived with his wife for five months only. His wife gives birth to a male child. Twenty days later, his son died. He divorced his wife in 1986. The court instructed him to give it to the divorced wife for the maintenance of three months and ten days. Accordingly, he gave the money to the divorced wife. After that, he lost the court's order. Then came his second marriage. He worked as a cook on a paid basis at BIWTA from 1979 to 1989. He became a baby taxi driver and a mechanic with the help of his paternal cousin, Surajan Bepary. Baby taxies were banned in 2002. He became a compressed natural gas (CNG)-run vehicle driver. His father is alive. He is one hundred and ten years old. He said, *"I am a victim of a conspiracy. My stepmother inspired my ex-wife to file a case against me so that my sister and I would not get my father's property."* He has a good reputation in the community where he lives. He is a man of a good soul. He is full of emotional feelings. At the time of a depth case study session, he cries and says, *"When I hear that I will be imprisoned, I become very upset and, if suicide was not a sin, I would commit suicide."**

On dowry and women's repression, the first wife of Abdul Mozid, Rehana, filed case no. 252/2017 (Savar) according to section 4 of

the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1940. The wise 's bearing memo no. 571, dated 25/07/2019, was given a probation order on conditions under the supervision of the probation officer of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka for one and a half years according to section 5 of the Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960.

The probationer, Abdul Mozid, is communicated regularly by the probation officer. Every month, he ensures his presence at the concerned probation office on time. He observed the given conditions on his probation bond. During the probation period, his behavior and activities are (observed). A positive change comes in his life. He renders voluntary services to the Government Chotomony Nibash, Azimpur, Dhaka, two hours a week. He also serves at a mosque situated at Muradpur, Jurain, Dhaka. Sheikh Sawroar Hossein is a neighbor of Abdul Mozid. He lives in Muradpur Kadamtoly. He tells me, *“Ove is my son. He was leading a jobless life. But with the help of Abdul Mozid, my son became a CNG engine mechanic. Abdul Mozid is a good man.”* Abdul Mozid is a helpful person. Aysha Begum, a neighbor of Abdul Mozid. She says, *“Abdul Mozid helped at the time of my son Amit’s admission to Muradpur High School. He is a man of good mentality.”* Abdul Mozid is a loyal person. Romika Begum is the surety of his probation bond. She is his neighbor. She says, *“Abdul Mozid helps at the time of my daughter’s marriage.”* One of his neighbors, Md. Salehin, says, *“Abdul Mozid is a religious man. He helps in cooking during religious ceremonies. He does not take money for this purpose. Hundreds of people praise the taste of his cooking.”* Abdul Mozid is a simple man. He says, *“When I hear I will not stay in prison, I will be able to live with my family. I will be able to continue my job. I thought Allah had sent the probation officer as an angel for me.”* Then he started crying.

This case is undoubtedly a unique example of probation. The probationer tries to cooperate with the probation officer. So, it is possible to overcome his problem in a short time. This case is under both sides (i.e.) probation and aftercare services.

Case-Two

Dulal Mia is over forty-seven years old. His father’s name is Md. Abdul Monnaf. Dulal Mia earns money by playing in an engine boat. He

also rears cows and earns twelve thousand takas every month. After passing the Junior School Certificate, his son Rabbi did not continue his study. At the time of the in-depth case study session, Dulal Mia tells the researcher, *“I wanted my son to continue his study. My son did not continue his studies. Now he is working in a garment factory. The society where we live is not good.”* His wife, Most. Layla Begum, is forty years old and a very good woman. She tells me, *“My husband, Dulal Mia, is a very good man. I love my husband. He also loves me very much. About nine months ago, I had an accident and broke my leg. My poor husband has spent ninety thousand takas for me”* Dulal Mia had to work in another man’s house from his childhood.

Dulal Mia is simple. One day, some of his friends told him to go with Barisal. They say to him, if he catches fish, he will get more money. Accordingly, he went with them. They took him to Chittagong and left him there alone. He works there for one year and returns home. Dulal Mia is a victim of a conspiracy.

Then his father takes him to the Union Parishad chairman, and Dulal Mia is fined eight thousand takas on the condition that the case is dismissed. After a few days, the police come to Dulal Mia’s home. Then he had his two daughters, his only son and his wife. They become afraid. Police could not arrest him. Then he went to a lawyer along with his father and wife. The lawyer demanded one lakh taka, and he also told Dulal Mia she would have to spend at least two months in prison. Then he and his family become helpless. They consult with other lawyers. The lawyer takes Dulal Mia to the probation officer of the Dhaka district.

At the time of the in-depth case study session, Dulal Mia tells the researcher, *“Probation Officer sir observed me and tells Dulal Mia does not seem to be a thief. He helps me and I get a probation order for two years and six months. When I hear that I will be able to stay with my family, I will be able to live in my community. I cried and remained motionless for twenty minutes and I thought Allah exists.”* During the probation period, Dulal Mia is monitored well. A positive change is found in him.

Probation and aftercare services have effectiveness. With the help of these services, a positive change can be brought to society. The services should be strengthened in different categories.

The case of Dulal Mia is complicated. The probationer is victimized. With the assistance of family members and probation officers, he leads his life in peace and quiet. From the findings of case studies, we find that the probation and aftercare services are helpful for the victims.

6.2. Key Informant Interview (KIIs)

The following two Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are presented here. The officers who deal with probation and aftercare services have given their opinions and opportunities to their clients. Among the respondents, one is probation officers, and the other one is social services officers. The respondents share their experiences with the researcher.

KIIs-One

Mr. Azizur Rahman Masud, Probation Officer, Dhaka. He has been working as a probation officer at the Dhaka district Probation Office for a long time. At the time of the key informant interview session, he said, *“There are no updated rules for probation and aftercare services. So, rules need to be framed for the successful implementation of probation and aftercare services.”* For the successful implementation of any service, there should be enough human resources and logistic support. At the time of the key informant interview session, he added, *“There is a need for sufficient human resources and logistic support for successful implementation of probation and aftercare services in all districts with proper coverage in Upazilas and metropolitan areas. Where there is a willingness on the part of judges to give probation orders, insufficient resources limit the capacity of judges to make such orders. Greater numbers of probation officers should be recruited to cover all the probation units, including Upazilas, UCDs, and metropolitan areas throughout the country. “*

Probation and aftercare services need to be empowered. It is essential to allocate separate and sufficient budgets for probation and aftercare services for all the probation units, including Upazilas, UCDs, and metropolitan areas. In addition, additional resources need to be channeled to ensure the capacity development of probation officers regarding probationers. Training, seminars, and workshops) must be conducted for stakeholders engaged in probation and aftercare services such as judges, probation officers, police officers, prison officials, lawyers, and social services officers. The public, the prosecution, and the judges still lack confidence in non-custodial penal interventions. Every district has a probation officer's post. The staffing pattern of the probation office is very inadequate both in size and quality. He has no field workers to assist him. As a probation officer, Mr. Masud deals with both probation and aftercare services.

KIIs-Two

Mr. S.M. Hasan is the Upazila Social Services Officer and Probation in addition to Dhamrai, Dhaka. He said, "The Department of Social Services (DSS), being a department of multipurpose and multilateral services, often engages the probation officer in other types of activities on the plea and contention that the said officer is relatively free in his domain of work. The number of probation officers is inadequate for supervising all those eligible to be released on probation. There are only seventy posts of probation officers across the country, though social services officers of all Upazilas and urban social services are in an additional charge of probation and aftercare services. "It is essential to allocate separate and sufficient budgets for probation and aftercare services. In addition, additional resources need to be channeled to ensure the capacity development of probation officers. He also said,

"Probation officers should be provided with specialized training for dealing with the concerned probationer and for rendering aftercare services. There should be a database to establish the number of potential candidates for alternatives to incarceration."

In the ending stage, it may say that the opinions of the probation officers are not satisfactory. Two probation officers (PO), one Upazila social services officer, and an urban social services officer are under Key

Informant's Interview (KIIs). All are in the same category as education, job tenure, and skills also. They try to remove the problems of the probationers, but due to a shortage of funds and lack of experience, the main obstacles to dealing efficiently are the shortage of funds and lack of experience. Mr. S. M. Hasan is a young and energetic social services officer. He suggests enhancing the Probation and Aftercare Services in the whole country. He means recruiting new probation officers at every unit of the social services office, i.e., Upazila social services offices, urban social services offices, and all metropolitan magistrates.

7. Analysis of the Findings

This study is based on qualitative data. So, the information has been collected through Case studies and KIIs. Findings are from the respondents and complemented by the researcher's observation. The findings reveal that the respondents in the cases are mainly poor, illiterate, and have low-income levels. Their ages are middle level. They are married. They have no permanent jobs. On the contrary, the probation officers and the respondents of the key informant interviews (KIIs) are government officials, knowledgeable and efficient also. The respondents get convictions for family conflict or theft. They are in their middle ages. They get short-time convictions. They are awarded probation orders.

The respondents of the key informant interviews (KIIs) of research tell us that the Urban Social Services Office, Upazila Social Services Office, and Probation Offices are the centers for discharging these services. They demand a time-befitting guideline for providing effective services. The probationers are satisfied with the services because they can stay with their families for these services. If they had to serve their sentences in jail, they could have ended up wasting a significant amount of time. The probationers have expectations like getting special training and employment with special grants that do not happen. They demand enough attention from the probation officers whom they only meet once in a while. However, their overall perception is to extend these services that have an impact on probationers' life.

The probationers feel that probation and aftercare services are effective and show a remarkable change in many aspects. These are some of the significant areas where probationers give their opinions for improvement. They gradually become homebound and settle into bondage in society. In this way, these services develop their social attachment. Their opinions are: (i) they can provide support to their families while at the same time serving their sentence; (ii) it enables them to have a good relationship with their families; (iv) the probationers can begin a better life as they are in the previous situation with the help of an aftercare service; (v) it helps them to have mental stability and be free from the stress that would have been caused by imprisonment; and (vi) probation and aftercare services help them to lead their lives and repent.

The probationers are happy to contribute to their families, maintain their employment. The aftercare service gives them a choice to earn money with the available skills and experience they have. The probationers say that they become upset hearing the impact of imprisonment. They have to lose homes or jobs that would lead to family breakdown. On the other hand, probation and aftercare services help them escape the stigma and flourish with other fellow beings. The probationers can repair their lives and continue living life while still serving their sentence. They take care of their families and maintain family ties which are very important in society.

Probation services are conditional upon the observance of regulations set by the authorities. The breach can lead to the termination of the liberty of the probationer. On the other hand, aftercare is not conditional as its rejection by the released prisoner does not lead to any penal consequences for him. Probation is a form of extramural treatment which holds the offender in a carefully controlled situation of restraint and avoids the stigma of institutionalization.

The core problem in doing research is the time factor. The researcher works within a limited period to complete the research work and cannot gather better information to make the topic clear in a short period. To conduct the study such a difficult job without a deep understanding of the matter, and properly analyzing it has also been a limitation of the research paper. There are no specific books on the

topic in Bangladesh, and on the internet, links about this topic are only available. So it is difficult for me to find out the sources. Some links on the internet want credit to show the contents. So, it has also been a limitation of the research paper. Time constraints, non-availability of respondents, limited funds, and shortage of literatures, etcetera.

8. Concluding Remarks

Probation and aftercare services are major correctional services in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh the services play a vital role to minimize correction. In this connection, the following recommendations are mentioned here:

It is necessary to follow the probation study and its impact on probationers. For this, all should be aware of probationers' facilities and their improvements. The implementation of probation should be made mandatory. The Department of Social Services (DSS) can play a vital role in this regard. For the betterment of probationers and released prisoners, proper guidelines regarding probation and aftercare services are to be developed. The Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960 (as amended in 1964) and the Probation of Offenders Rules, 1971 would need to be amended. Sufficient human resources and logistic support are required to extend probation and aftercare services to all districts, with adequate coverage in upazilas and metropolitan areas. Where there is a willingness on the part of judges to give probation orders, insufficient resources limit the capacity of judges to make such orders. A reasonable number of probation officers with social work background need to recruit.

For existing probation and aftercare services, increased monitoring and supervision by the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW), and respective s are required. Probation Offices must relocate houses from their current location. Probation Officers are expected to provide proper transportation in order to efficiently discharge services. There should be a forum to discuss issues of probation and increased coordination between various stakeholders, such as the District Judge, Department of Social Services Officers (DSS), and arrangement of national and international conferences.

A large number of respondents should be included in such a study. If both the male and female respondents were included, it would be a more unbiased and representative study. So, it is possible to do a comparative study between males and females in the future as well. The government and policymakers may consider the overall discussion with the enlightenment of findings and recommendations as guidelines for correctional rehabilitation services in Bangladesh.

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